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DRAWING is as easy an acquirement as writing, and should form part of the commonest education: a knowledge of it is of the utmost value, and it should be taught in every educational institution throughout the kingdom, not excepting our "National Schools." This we have repeated for years past in various shapes and various places, and when it was not everywhere admitted to be true. It is unnecessary for us to say, therefore, that we cordially welcome the first steps taken by the new governmental "Department of Practical Art," which are founded upon this belief, and have for their object to give effect to the recommendation. Our Schools of Design, which have now been in operation fourteen years, have failed to do all that was expected from them, not simply because of their mismanagement, but because almost necessarily they have been mere drawing schools, and have been used for teaching the means instead of the end. Those who entered, instead of going there to study the principles and practice of decorative art, and to *apply* their knowledge of drawing, went there to learn *how to draw*, and mostly left even before they had acquired that. The mismanagement to which we have alluded as affecting the school at different periods, we never shrank from exposing and combatting, and in consequence our journal enjoyed at one time the distinction of being tabooed at Somerset House!

We have called for elementary schools throughout the country to prepare the eye and hand not merely of those who proposed, when so prepared, to commence the study of design with the view of practising it as a profession, but of the general public, who must be their employers and judges, and elementary schools we are about to have. Our readers are already aware that the Department of Practical Art have offered to aid the establishment of elementary classes, or schools for drawing and modelling, in the advantages of which all classes of the community may share, by appointing a competent master, and guaranteeing the payment to him of a certain income for a fixed period, in case the fees to be derived from the instruction of the scholars should not suffice to pay the master's salary; and lending suitable ornamental drawing copies, models, coloured examples, and books, under certain easy conditions.

The Westminster Mechanics' Institute have the credit of being the first to avail themselves of the privileges offered, and on Friday, the 4th inst. the Right Hon. J. W. Henley, President of the Board of Trade, presided over a meeting there to inaugurate an elementary drawing school, in connection with the Metropolitan School at Somerset House. Sir W. Page Wood, in stating the objects for which the meeting had assembled, congratulated those interested in the subject on the presence of one of the members of the Cabinet, of which they would not have had to boast had it not been for their steady attachment to good order and government. It should be remembered that by the pursuit of such studies as those now pointed to, they were enabled to apply them to the benefit of their fellow creatures, and to the glory of God.

The chairman spoke briefly, but earnestly. He said he believed it would be felt by all, that to young persons who had a taste for drawing, and who wished to succeed in the higher departments of the schools of design, it would be a great advantage that first elementary schools should be raised on sound and good principles, because it would be apparent to all that when persons began to think on wrong principle, there was as much difficulty to unlearn what they had been taught as to acquire a sound knowledge at the outset. It would not be necessary for him to go at any length into the matter immediately before the meeting, as Mr. Cole, the superintendent of the department, was present, and would lay before them some of the principles on which these schools proceeded. He believed that such institutions as these were calculated to do a great deal of good, as they would afford opportunities, for those who sought to elevate their minds, to accomplish that laudable end.

Mr. Henry Cole then read an address, in the course of which he expressed his conviction that if it were necessary to choose between two courses for fostering the production of improved design in manufactures, the education of the public at large or a special class of artizans, the end would be more readily secured by teaching the public aright and convincing it of its ignorance, than by educating the artizan only. If you leave the public ignorant the educated artizan will not be employed; but if you lead the public to feel the want of beauty and propriety,—to be sensible of their presence and impatient at their absence,—to distinguish between symmetry of form and disproportion,—to demand from art at least the aspiration after the perfection of Nature and the recognition of Nature's eternal fitness and simplicity,—he was sure the public would soon demand good designs in manufactures and be willing to pay for them; and that the instincts of traders for their own interests would teach them to find the means of supplying such demands.

"A power of drawing," said the reader, "is too commonly regarded as a luxury and superfluity in education; permissible to girls, who ultimately become women better educated and more refined than men, but unnecessary for boys, who become men intensely skilled in the anatomical points of a horse, but unable to draw straight lines. Drawing is regarded as 'an extra' in school bills, which parents rather avoid than encourage. The same sort of mistake used once to be made with writing.

It should be felt to be a disgrace to every one who affects to be well educated, if he cannot draw straight lines, and make at least simple geometrical forms. Those who cannot do so have no right to expect you to believe that they can even see correctly; yet such is the anomalous state of matters on this point that persons who are unable to use a pencil will affect raptures at paintings, and will criticise art and announce canons of taste with absolute dogmatism. A modern writer observes, "Ask a connoisseur who has scampered over all Europe the shape of the leaf of an elm, and the chances are ninety to one that he cannot tell you; and yet he will be voluble of criticism on every painted landscape from Dresden to Madrid, and pretend to tell you whether they are like nature or not. Ask an enthusiastic chatterer in the Sistine Chapel how many ribs he has, and you get no answer; but it is odds that you do not get out of the door without his informing you that he considers such and such a figure badly drawn.' • • • At the present time we all admit that writing is necessary to be taught to every one, and is serviceable in all relations of life; but it may be easily shown that the power of representing forms by drawing is frequently quite, if not more, needful. And it is equally useful to all classes of the community,—to him who orders a house to be built and pays for it, to him who superintends its building, and to him who actually saws and joins the timber or lays the masonry. All would perform their respective parts with greater power and wisdom, and with greater saving of labour, if they all knew what straight lines were, and possessed the power of making them. But how rare is the possession of this simple power. How many landlords in the country are able to draw a plan of the ground which their houses occupy, or to draw the shape of a cupboard they wish to order from the village carpenter? How many manufacturers are there who direct the labour of thousands of persons in producing ornamental works, and realise thousands of pounds from them, but are unable to draw correctly the form of one of their simplest patterns?"

Mr. Redgrave, R.A. afterwards read a paper, wherein he entered at some length into the general question, as to the advantages derivable from an education in this branch of the arts, by the establishment of schools for the instruction of those who, with small means, are desirous of attaining proficiency.

A resolution, pledging the meeting to co-operate in facilitating the study of the arts as applied to practical purposes, was moved by Mr. Godwin, seconded by Sir De Lacy Evans, M.P. and supported by the Rev. Mr. Carreton, the rector of St. Margaret's. The mover alluded to the hopeful spread of a love of art amongst the community, the value to mechanics, even in a pecuniary point of view, of a knowledge of drawing, and the want, on the part of architects, of artistic artisans.

The Dean of St. Paul's (the Rev. H. Milman), in moving a vote of thanks to the Chairman, dwelt most eloquently on the connection between the *beautiful*, as we recognise it by our senses, and the *good*, which we acknowledge by our reason.

In the evening there was a meeting of mechanics, artisans, and students, fully attended, at which Mr. Burchett, the head master of the school at Somerset House, delivered an able lecture, describing the course of study illustrated by examples on the walls. The classes are to be held at present only in the evening, and the payment is to be at the rate of 1½d. per lesson of two hours; so that it may be hoped that they will be attended by the numerous artisans of the neighbourhood,—"that every carpenter who has to cut straight lines, every smith who has to forge them, every bricklayer who has to lay them, will attend this school at their leisure hours in the evening, to acquire a power of seeing accurately by means of drawing accurately, and will send their children, both boys and girls; for, to see correctly and to draw correctly is quite as useful to one sex as to the other." In the morning, hereafter, we hope that the upper and middle classes in Westminster will attend; that the professional men and the tradesmen will send their children.

On the following day, the 5th inst. Mr. Owen Jones gave his first lecture on the articles in the museum of the department, at Marlborough House, to an audience rather less numerous than we expected to find it. We must content ourselves on the present

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